

MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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MEPI Medregion Update Newsletter is produced by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Regional Office at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

SPEAK UP STOP DISCRIMINATION

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2010

[Please click here to learn more about Human Rights Day 2010.](#)

Secretary Clinton on Human Rights Day 2010.

"Sixty-two years after Eleanor Roosevelt laid out those clear, inviolate principles, we again stand upon a threshold as the need to support and defend civil society has taken on renewed urgency. A vibrant civil society is an essential component of free nations, yet many governments continue to employ intimidation, questionable legal practices, restrictions, detention, and willful ignorance to silence the voices of those who defend human rights. The United States is committed to promoting and defending civil society around the world. And we will continue to remind leaders of their

responsibilities to their citizens under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To support this, I have asked our embassies to open their doors to civil society activists today to listen to their concerns and demonstrate our support.

The Declaration has long served as a beacon to those seeking the protection of fundamental, internationally recognized rights and liberties. Today, and every day, the United States stands with those committed to making the vision enshrined in the Declaration a reality for all people. We call on every nation to join us in working to fulfill the Declaration's promise, at home and abroad." [Please click here to read the full remarks.](#) ■

10 December 2010 is Human Rights Defenders Who Act to End Discrimination Day. Human Rights Day 2010 highlighted and promoted the achievements of human rights defenders and emphasized the primary responsibility governments have to enable and protect their role. The day was also intended to inspire a new generation of defenders to speak up and take action to end discrimination in all of its forms whenever and wherever it is manifested. Human rights defenders speak out against abuse and violations including discrimination, exclusion, oppression and violence. They advocate justice and seek to protect the victims of human rights violations. They demand accountability for perpetrators and transparency in government action. ■

Combating Child Labor

Lebanese report that one of their most significant social problems is child labor, especially in underserved urban neighborhoods of major cities and in rural areas. Poverty is one of the main causes of child labor and becomes a symptom as well. Poor parents send their children to work for reasons of economic exigency. The consequent denial of education then blocks the escape route from poverty for the next generation of the household. Other factors compound this cycle; for example, schools are often inaccessible or expensive for some families leading to high school dropout.



(Continued on page 4)

MEPI Medregion Office News

Maktabat MEPI Library مكتبة

MEPI is pleased to announce the launch of an online MEPI Library, or Maktabat MEPI, found at <http://maktabatmepi.org>. The **MEPI Library** is an online repository for training materials generated by MEPI-funded projects, with the aim of making these resources available to a wide audience in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Materials from both MENA and U.S. implementers are included, and the site will continue to expand as additional content becomes available. A broad range of topics are included, reflecting the wealth of information and knowledge developed by MEPI projects. Maktabat MEPI features more than 400 training resources that some 40 partner organizations in the U.S. and the Middle East have developed with MEPI funding. The site includes materials in English, Arabic and French. ■

U.S.-North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity

As a follow-up to President Obama's June 2009 Cairo speech and his April 2010 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, the Department of State is launching the U.S.-North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity (NAPEO), a new public-private partnership to better link entrepreneurs and business leaders in the United States and North Africa (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia). NAPEO will operate in close cooperation with Partners for a New Beginning (PNB) as the key regional entity to support PNB engagement in North Africa.

What are NAPEO's Goals?

NAPEO aims to foster increased U.S. economic engagement in the Maghreb and overall economic opportunity in the region. It seeks to do this by encouraging start-ups through training and improved access to capital and by inspiring youth and budding entrepreneurs of all ages to play a role in job creation in the region. NAPEO also aims to encourage partners from business, universities, and public entities in the Maghreb and in the United States to work more closely together to promote economic opportunity in the region, as well as people-to-people links between the two regions. Increased cross-border linkages in the Maghreb will empower regional entrepreneurs to make better use of available economic tools to address critical socio-economic issues, such as high youth unemployment.

[\(Click here to learn more about the NAPEO initiative\)](#)

MEPI ALUMNI: Share your MEPI story

The MEPI Alumni Network is a community of participants of MEPI-sponsored programs. It provides opportunities for participants to network with each other, develop their careers, and learn more about the accomplishments of the alumni community, thus helping to extend their program experience. We would like to feature brief reports about MEPI alumni because your actions will inspire others in the alumni community. The details of your experiences — both the successes and the challenges — will provide crucial information and guidance to others.

Please send us your success story and send a digital photo of yourself to go along with it!

There are no set requirements for the story as we are trying to create a forum where you can share and describe your experiences in the way you choose to; however, our alumni have included some or all of the following in their stories:

- Description and goals of the projects.
- Basic statistics (Number of participants, funding received, length of the project, etc...)
- The importance of the project.
- MEPI's role in the project.
- Assistance received from local/national governments or local NGO(s)?
- Future vision for the project (if it is still ongoing).
- Photos that can be published (preferably with a caption and photographer's name for copyrights purposes).

Please send us your stories or any questions you have to the following email address:

mepi-medregion@state.gov

We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Fostering Judicial Independence and Rule of Law

By Wahid Labidi

Twenty one judges from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and UAE attended a workshop in Hammamet, Tunisia from 23 to 28 November 2010. The workshop training, which was organized by the Tunis-based Arab Institute for Human Rights in partnership with the Tunisian Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, is one of a series that comes as part of the MEPI-funded project "Consolidation of Human Rights Culture in Six Middle Eastern and North African Countries". The project aims at enhancing the understanding of human rights and democracy by NGOs, judges, lawyers and journalists in MENA countries.

During the six-day workshop participants addressed different topics to enhance their understanding and reinforce their respect for International Human Rights Standards relevant to fair trial principles, independence of the judiciary and the rule of

law. At a first stage, the workshop aimed to enrich dialogue among participants by creating a space for constructive discussions on how judges and academics from the Arab region can work collectively to respect Human Rights. Then it focused on how to best use human rights, international standards and other mechanisms to foster unbiased trial procedures, independence of the judiciary and rule of law.

Participants have agreed to further discuss networking mechanisms that would improve collaboration and exchange of information on issues related to fair trial principles, independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. Trainers and participants evaluated the sessions expressing their appreciation of the debate and knowledge they acquired due to the training.

The trainees expressed unanimously the positive effects of the training on their attitude towards human rights



Some of the participants in the workshop



The training session on international and regional mechanisms to protect Human Rights

issues and their awareness of the sensitivity of their position and their key role (as magistrates) in the protection of human rights. Some participants stressed their willingness in the

future to link more effectively between national legislation and the international instruments ratified by their countries before stating their judgments and verdicts. ■

Maghreb Conference on Entrepreneurship

The U.S. Department of State and the U.S.-Algeria Business Council hosted the first-ever U.S.-Maghreb Entrepreneurship Conference in Algiers on December 1-2, 2010. This conference is a direct result of the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship held in Washington, D.C., in April, 2010 and demonstrates the continuing work of business and non-governmental organizations to create regional partnerships that promote entrepreneurship. The conference brought together North African business leaders and entrepreneurs, aspiring youth entrepreneurs, business leaders of the North African Diaspora, along with U.S. business leaders and entrepreneurs.

More than 300 participants discussed key issues and challenges for advancing entrepreneurship in the Maghreb region, including lessons learned from the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, improving access to capital in the Maghreb, catalyzing youth entrepreneurship, perspectives from U.S. and Maghreb entrepreneurs, promoting cross-border business partnership initiatives, regional leadership and training for entrepreneurs, transatlantic business networking, incubating innovation and technology, and exploring business opportunities in the creative industries.

Assistant Secretary Fernandez led the U.S. delegation to U.S.-Maghreb Entrepreneurship Conference. Following the Conference, Assistant Secretary Fernandez traveled to Tunisia, Libya and Morocco to meet with senior officials and businesspeople to galvanize support for NAPEO and to further economic engagement throughout the Maghreb region.

[*Please click here to learn more about the U.S. Maghreb Entrepreneurship Conference*](#)

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In this regard, The International Management & Training Institute (IMTI) in collaboration with the Higher Council for Childhood and the Unit for Combating Child Labor at the Ministry of Labor in Lebanon has successfully implemented a MEPI-funded project on Combating Child Labor in Sin-El-Fil and Bourj Hammoud poverty pockets.

The project aimed at addressing the chronic problem of child labor in the targeted poverty pocket of Sin el Fil through a series of activities that promoted awareness of children's rights and encouraged monitoring and reporting on cases of child labor.

Training workshops

IMTI conducted two workshops for 33 participants training them on monitoring. These participants come from community based organizations involved in child protection and child labor.

The training focused on four key competencies, each addressed during a full day of training. The first competency was the legal aspect of children's rights. The training highlighted from both a local and international perspective the foundations and international conventions and human rights articles related to child labor.

These were linked to applicable laws, the Child Rights Convention

Combating Child Labor



and International Labour Organization (ILO) Agreements.

The second competency comprised recognizing and understanding child labor. These aspects related to child labor include reasons, forms, worst types, effects on the children and measures undertaken to remedy the problem.

The third competency focused on networking amongst stakeholders, drawing especially upon those present representing civil society organizations that deliver services in the target areas. Networking focused as well on ways and means to establish working ties and collaboration with the Unit for Combating Child Labor at the Lebanese Ministry of Labor.

The final competency addressed personal qualifications and necessary monitoring skills to enable volunteers and social workers to track child workers and report them to the Child Labor Unit (CLU).

All training was conducted in Arabic by professional trainers, and experts in their fields. The training was followed by a case study that the participants had to handle and evaluate. The case study focused on ways to assist children and how to direct problems to concerned authorities. ■



Middle East Partnership Initiative

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEPI partners with local, regional and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments.

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office Tunis administers MEPI local projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza and accounts for more than \$5 million in program funding in 2010. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, Tunis RO provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants) as well as supporting visits, seminars and training programs to advance the formation of communities for tomorrow.

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